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ABSTRACT

An understanding of regionalism in early 19th century Spanish America is crucial to any understanding of this region's economic development. Regionalism became the barrier to the kind of integrated national economy that some writers claim could have been implemented had it not been for the imposition of dependency by external forces. This dissolution into regionalism after the wars of independence can be found in the pattern transported to Spanish America by the Spanish conquerors. The foundation upon which regionalism in Spanish America stood was the town or city. The town centers of administration took the lead in the wars of independence. The wars of independence may be interpreted as a resurgent regionalism rebelling against the centralizing tendencies of the Spanish system. Chief among the issues that separated Spanish American elites in the aftermath of the wars of independence was that of centralism versus federalism (regionalism). Efforts in 19th century Spanish America to form an integrated internal, industrial, and capitalist economy based upon the national market were abandoned or diminished. The creation of an integrated national economy was blocked, not by external forces, but by internal constraints or regionalism. (SM)

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REGIONALISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY SPANISH AMERICA

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Some explanation of the origin of this project is necessary in order to understand why I see the issue of regionalism as important to my past and future research. For the last ten years I have studied political and economic development in an effort to better understand why some areas developed relatively high income industrial economies (usually capitalist) while others have not. As a result of my research, I have found the two competing major approaches to development -- "modernization theory" and "dependency theory" -- wanting. The former mainly because of its ethnocentrism and total lack of applicability to all but a tiny corner of the world, and the latter because its focus on the external trade relations of underdeveloped countries cannot adequately account for the origins of dependency (although it does accurately *describe* the historical and current condition of much of the Third World, including Spanish America).[1] The currently popular alternative perspective to both of these - mode of production theory - has the advantage of focusing on the internal economic and class basis of a country's development or underdevelopment without ignoring the effects of the international economy, i.e. dependency. Employing the mode of production approach, one may conclude that Spanish American dependency has been the result of either its pre- or non-capitalist mode of production being exploited by its articulation with capitalism through trade (mercantile capital) or by its articulation with industrial capitalism (capitalist mode of production) in the same social formation. The former explanation is usually reserved for the period prior to the late nineteenth century, while the latter is employed once the

capitalist mode of production becomes rooted in the internal economy.[2] While this approach can prove fruitful, it is marred by an overly economistic focus. Since modes of production are conceptualized almost in their entirety as economic social relations and forces of production, politics, religion, ideas, etc. are viewed as epiphenomena of the economic - that is, determined by the economic and explained through the economic level.[3] While this may be true of the capitalist mode of production (and even this is a doubtful proposition) it is not true of systems with pre- or non-capitalist modes of production. In his brief analysis of pre-capitalist modes of production, Karl Marx noted in these the dominance of levels of society other than the economic - including the ideological and political.[4] Thus, if as mode of production analysts claim, Spanish America was dominated by pre- or non-capitalist modes of production prior to the late nineteenth century, and featured an articulation of capitalist and pre- or non-capitalist modes of production thereafter, then the political or ideological levels of society must be the primary focus of analysis.

My previous work employed a mode of production approach as its base and an attempt was made to avoid its tendency to the economistic by focusing on the role of politics, classes, and the state in creating the conditions for the development of trade dependency in Spanish America in the early nineteenth century. Briefly, it was argued that the political struggles over the creation of new state apparatuses that raged in most early nineteenth century Spanish American countries led to the articulation of these non-capitalist modes of production with merchant capitalism. It was my contention

that, because the conflict in Spanish America was over the form the state would take vis à vis the interests of competing elites, emergent state apparatuses looked outside - to the world economy - for the resources necessary to strengthen themselves and ultimately perform their role in enforcing order and elite accommodation. Agro-mineral export economies, with each commodity sector tied to the international economy and not to each other in a national market, best maintained the compartmentalization of the elite (the foundation of elite harmony in colonial era) and, at the same time, gave states the resources needed to forge large armies and bureaucracies that could challenge the forces of regionalism. This was not a conscious process, I argued, but one which was in keeping with both the economic and political structures created in the colonial era.[5]

THE RAGE OF REGIONALISM AND SPANISH AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

Chief among the issues that separated Spanish American elites in the aftermath of the wars of independence was that of centralism vs. federalism (regionalism). What is most fascinating about the the independence struggle in North America a few decades earlier when compared to that in Spanish America is the coalescence of the former into one national entity and the disintegration of the latter. On the surface, one would have expected quite the opposite to have resulted given the bureaucratic centralism of the Spanish colonial period as contrasted with the much more decentralized pattern in the British American colonies. The implications, I believe, go much further than the simple geographic-political fact that the United States became a large continental nation while Spanish America did not. Centralization (albeit in a federalist form) in the United States had

as its aim not only a certain structuring of the political order, but more importantly a certain structuring of the economy. Hamilton's commitment to creating a national manufacturing sector and a national market in the US was part and parcel of the Federalist centralizing scheme. While the US remained primarily an agro-mineral exporter throughout most of the nineteenth century, it at the same time developed an integrated internal industrial capitalist economy based upon the national market. The political will to achieve this end existed quite in advance of the economic interests that could sustain it - it was, in effect a project of the state.[6]

One can find in Spanish America of the nineteenth century some faint echo of this type of project in perhaps the program of Bernardino Rivadavia in Argentina or the pronouncements of Finance Minister Manuel Camilo Vial in Chile. Yet, in all cases such efforts were either abandoned or beaten back because states were too weak or reluctant to impose them.[7] On the political side, Bolivar's famed attempt to unite all of the former Spanish American colonies into a grand continental nation failed miserably. Not only was such unity a chimera but, as the early years of nineteenth century independence wore on, political disintegration continued unabated. The Central American Republic disbanded, Gran Colombia fell apart, and the effort to re-unite Peru and Bolivia (Upper and Lower Peru) crashed upon the shoals of Chilean regionalism.[8] In Spanish America, the apparent centralism of the colonial period evaporated into nothing upon independence.

It seems to me then that regionalism in early nineteenth century Spanish America is crucial to any understanding of its economic

development. I see regionalism as a barrier to the kind of integrated national economy that *dependentista* writers claim could have been constituted had it not been for the imposition of dependency by external forces. However, from my perspective the link with the international economy that created Spanish American dependency was simply one alternative direction that could have been taken. The other, the creation of an integrated national economy was blocked, not by external forces - the international economy - but rather by internal constraints - particularly regionalism.

Why then this strength of regionalism? Marx, in a rarely cited essay noted the circumstances under which regionalism drew its strength in Spain,

> Since the establishment of the absolute monarch they (the towns) have vegetated in a state of continuous decay. We have not here to state the circumstances, political or economical, which destroyed Spanish commerce, industry, navigation and agriculture... As the commercial and industrial life of the towns declined, internal exchanges became rare, the mingling of the inhabitants of different provinces less frequent, and the means of communication neglected, and the great roads gradually deserted. Thus the local life of Spain, the independence of it provinces and communes, the diversified state of society originally based on the physical configuration of the country, and historically developed by the detached manner in which the several provinces emancipated themselves from the Moorish rule, and formed little independent commonwealths -- was now finally strengthened and confirmed by the economical revolution which dried up the sources of national activity. And while the absolute monarchy found in Spain material in its very nature repulsive to centralization, it did all in its power to prevent the growth of common interests arising out of a national division of labor and the multiplicity of internal exchanges -- the very basis on which alone a uniform system of administration and the rule of general laws can be created. Thus the absolute monarchy in Spain, bearing but a superficial resemblance to the absolute monarchies of Europe in general, is rather to be arranged in a class with Asiatic forms of government. Spain, like Turkey, remained an agglomeration of mismanaged republics with a nominal sovereign at their head. Despotism changed

> character in the different provinces with the arbitrary interpretation of general laws by viceroys and governors; but despotic as was the government it did not prevent the provinces from subsisting with different laws and customs, different coins, military banners of different colors, and with their respective systems of taxation. The Oriental despotism attacks municipal self government only when it is opposed to its direct interests, but is very glad to allow those institutions to continue as long as they take off its shoulders the duty of doing something and spare it the trouble of regular administration.[9]

The most interesting thing about this insight is that Marx finds the basis for regionalism here not in the fact of regional differences or economy but rather in the political failure of the Spanish state to centralize as later European absolutist monarchies had. As Perry Anderson notes, while other absolutist states were forced to fall back upon internal resources to finance the growth of state military and bureaucratic apparatuses, the Spanish state could "...dispense with the slow fiscal and administrative unification which was a precondition of Absolutism elsewhere: the stubborn recalcitrance of Aragon was compensated by the limitless compliance of Peru."[10] In effect, the external source of wealth from America freed the Spanish state from the difficult task of national economic and political integration. Further, regionalism is not an effect of the mode of production but rather is an effect of the political level - the state.

It seems that this peculiar pattern where an ostensibly absolutist centralist form overlays an essentially regionalist reality - and in fact creates and maintains that reality - was transferred to the Americas by Spain. The conquest practice of founding an administrative center - town or city - with jurisdiction over a large productive rural hinterland and overlaying that with a centralized bureaucratic structure - the viceroyaltys and audencias -

essentially replicated the pattern of social and political organization familiar to the Spaniards.[11] It was not a terribly difficult undertaking, at least in the areas already under the jurisdiction of the two great indigenous empires in America - Aztec and Inca - because both were organized on the basis of what Marx called the "Asiatic mode of production."[12] These empires (the Inca perhaps more than the Aztec) were basically tribute states where relatively isolated village communities were linked together in great conglomerations by the central state apparatus. The state had very little effect on local life and economy except as a burden that was somewhat ameliorated by the redistributive practices of the central state.[13] Thus, while the Spanish indeed transformed America, that transformation was less than is often believed. In fact, for many centuries the Spanish colonizers employed - albeit in a modified form - many of the traditional practices of the indigenous empires, i.e. tribute, *mita*, *yanaconaje*.

On paper - and in actual form - the Spanish created a highly centralized hierarchic bureaucratic apparatus in the Americas. Governors were subordinate to viceroys and corregidors to both. However, any subordinate could communicate directly with the king and council circumventing the more apparent than real hierarchic order. Administrators at all levels were often able to disobey the orders of their superiors, including the king, under the pretext that the law or policy could not be applied to local conditions - "I obey but do not execute." Relief was sought in appeal to king and council for a change or exception.[14] Such practices allowed for an inordinate degree of flexibility in a system that on the surface appeared

extraordinarily rigid. It also, and more importantly, allowed for regional variation in the administration of what was intended to be a uniform system of rule. In Spain, to recount what Marx noted above, "Despotism changed character in the different provinces with the arbitrary interpretation of general laws by viceroys and governors..."[15] In the New world such flexibility gave the bureaucracy wide latitude in adjusting their actions to local conditions without deligitimating the system.[16]

The flexibility of the Spanish colonial bureaucracy allowed, and was a function of, the great degree of control over local affairs held by local elites. Royal administrators who usually bought their offices were easily co-opted by local elites. Interested in recouping their investment in office, local crown officials readily fit into the local power structure and identified with its interests.[17] So prevalent was this "corruption" that eighteenth century Bourbon reformers sought to regain control of the colonial bureaucracy by abolishing the corregimiento and instituting a well paid parallel bureaucracy of superintendents, intendants, and subdelegates.[18] So strong, however, were local interests that even many of these new officials succumbed to their pull.[19]

The real foundation upon which regionalism in Spanish America (as in Spain) stood was, of course, the town or city. As noted earlier, the conquering Spaniards replicated in the New World the pattern they were most familiar with and which the Thomistic political thought of their day required. The town had always been central to Spanish development and the same held true for the colonies.[20] In Spain, the city or town rose not as a center of commerce or production as in

northern Europe but rather as a center of administration for newly held territories during the *Reconquista*. While relatively autonomous themselves, they at the same time were outposts of the central power - the king. It is this special combination of independence and dependence that characterized the Spanish and Spanish American town or city.[21] The Spanish American *cabildo* (town council), powerful in the first half of the sixteenth century, declined as an active institution in the ensuing period. This decline is often attributed to the sale of *cabildo* offices and the imposition of the *corregimiento* which, it is argued, put the cities and towns firmly under royal administration.[22] However, as in Spain, the destruction of *cabildo* autonomy did not mean the destruction of local control. The above cited "corruption" of local crown officials sufficed to preserve their autonomy in spite of efforts to destroy it and, in fact, proved to serve local interests well as evidenced by the secular decline of wealth going to the viceregal treasuries and Spain throughout the Hapsburg era.[23] When, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the *cabildos* were revived as part of the Bourbon reform program in the colonies, they proved well suited to take on the mantle of statehood with the coming of independence. The revival of the *cabildos* by the Bourbon reformers who sought to re-centralize colonial administration (often through decentralization - note the creation of new viceroyaltys, *audencias*, *consulados*) and their ultimately anti-regime activities during the wars of independence is not as contradictory as it may seem. As "corrupt" crown officials were replaced by the well paid and more efficient Bourbon bureaucrats, it is not surprising that local elites would again take great interest in the *cabildos*. While

local power and interests could be expressed by the local royal bureaucracy during much of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, they required an independent vehicle once that luxury was withdrawn. Indeed, *cabildos* took the lead in the wars of independence. According to the analysis of O. Carlos Stoetzer, the wars of independence may be interpreted as a resurgent regionalism rebelling against the centralizing tendencies of the Bourbon system (albeit only when that system was considerably weakened by the French occupation of Spain).[24]

What greatly facilitated the significant role played by the *cabildos* in the independence period was the fact that almost all units of government in the colonial system mirrored the structure of the central state itself. Each regional center, especially the viceregal seats or those with *audencias*, were potential nuclei of central states. Executive and judicial functions were performed in tandem on the model of king/council - viceroy/*audencia*, governor/*audencia*, *corregidor/cabildo*. When the overlapping of jurisdiction characteristic of this system of multiple hierarchies disintegrated as a result of intra-bureaucratic conflict - Hapsburg vs. Bourbon elements of the bureaucracy, opposition to the Bourbon reforms, and a general deligitimation of the bureaucracy with the occupation of Spain by France, the centrifugal forces for autonomy once kept in check captured the historical stage.[25] When the royal bureaucracy in the Viceroyalty of *Rio de la Plata* fell into disarray after the British invasions of 1806 and 1807, the cabildo of Buenos Aires took a leading role in deposing of viceroy and in creating the Junta which ultimately took power.[26] Similarly, the *cabildo* of Santiago in Chile was

employed by local elites to depose the new governor imposed upon them by the Viceroy of Peru and installed an independent *Junta de Gobierno*.[27] It is not surprising then that this pattern was repeated countless times throughout Spanish America regardless of whether the *cabildos* were made up primarily of *creoles* or Spaniards, or held royalist or anti-royalist sentiments.[28]

The breakdown of the Spanish central state bureaucratic apparatus in America revealed a system held together by a very slender thread indeed. It was ultimately the person of the king that held together an American empire almost always potentially on the brink of dissolution. The only question that remained was how far this dissolution would go. Several tendencies made themselves felt as Spanish America groped its way towards the construction of new state apparatuses. Bolivar, of course, had the intention of creating a grand continental federated state but, given the material he had to work with, even the pseudo-monarchical "life presidency" he advocated could not re-connect what had been sundered by the legitimacy crisis, the loss of the king and, of course, the intense regionalism these had unleashed.[29] Those who saw a solution in a state based upon the Bourbon viceroyaltys were most successful, but in certain areas - particularly the Rio de la Plata and New Granada - localist forces who preferred at the very least a federative solution fought long drawn out battles to win their autonomy. In Central America, for example, localist sentiment was so powerful that it destroyed the federal republic and balkanized the region. The resulting five mini-states, often described as city-states, have still today not yet emerged as viable national entities.[30]

I have already speculated about the implications Spanish American regionalism had for its economic development in the early nineteenth century. Not only does the evidence point to regionalism as a major factor in the creation of dependent agro-mineral export economies but one must also take into account the cost of the civil wars it engendered. Vast economic resources were destroyed, capital flight overseas encouraged, and the consolidation of new states made that much more problematic. When central states finally achieved hegemony, it was based not on the interdependency of regions, but rather on the typical Spanish pattern of their separation and linkage only to the center. In the same manner, the Spanish American economies were linked only to the center which served as a conduit to the international economy. In a sense, the Spanish American national economies were integrated only at the level of the world economy.

While hardly proven here, this argument rather concretely addresses the role of regionalism in the creation of nineteenth century Spanish American dependency. It is, however, not without its problems. Most importantly, the analysis rests upon a conception of the colonial regime being divided into relatively autonomous or isolated regions held together by the facade of a centralized hierarchic royal bureaucracy. While this thesis can arguably be held at the political level, recent research makes it difficult to sustain for the colonial economy. Few now hold to the thesis that economic activity in Spanish America stagnated or declined as a result of the breakdown of trade with Spain in the seventeenth century.[31] On the contrary, it has been shown that this was a period of intense growth and development characterized by production for the home market and a

vital inter-regional trade.[32] It is further argued that agricultural haciendas became capitalist enterprises geared toward the market and profit rather than self-sufficient "natural economies" as was earlier believed.[33] This evidence in fact has been employed to support the *dependencia* contention that Spanish America has been capitalist since the sixteenth century and that development there can only be achieved by a break with the dominating metropolis (or capitalist world economy). It would seem then to be wrong-headed to attempt to find barriers to internal economic integration in the political fact of Spanish American regionalism.

While I have not examined this challenge in any satisfactory manner, I have a few general observations which partially address this issue and will inform my further progress in this area. First, the implications of a fairly commercialized agriculture during the colonial period are not crystal clear. The existence of a commercialized agriculture does not automatically connote capitalist relations or forces of production. Ruggiero Moreno has rather convincingly argued that a similar commercialization of agriculture in sixteenth century Eastern Europe created a kind of "feudal" commercial system which enserfed the peasantry and increased production for export by the intensification of feudal social relations and the extension of feudal forces of production rather than proletarianization, wage labor, and expanded reproduction characteristic of the capitalist mode of production.[34] Second, one can certainly question the importance of inter-regional trade, especially as a force for true regional economic integration. It seems that rather than a general commodification of the economy,

inter-regional trade really functioned as a kind of "long distance trade" in non-essentials or in the provisioning of unproductive administrative centers, i.e. mercury to the silver mines or Chilean wheat to Lima. The needs of the great majority of the population in Spanish America were provided for locally. In any event, it is still questionable that these economic activities could shape the overall political context.

NOTES

1. See discussions of modernization and dependency theory in: Richard Higgott, Political Development Theory (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983; Joseph Kahl, Modernization, Exploitation and Dependency (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1976); J. Samuel Valenzuela and Arturo Valenzuela, "Modernization and Dependency," Comparative Politics 1978 10(4):535-557; Agustín Cueva, El desarrollo de capitalismo en América Latina (México: Siglo XXI, 1977); John G. Taylor, From Modernisation to Modes of Production (London: Macmillan Press, 1979); and Magnus Blostrom and Bjorn Hettne, Development Theory in Transition (London: Zed Press, 1984).

2. See Ernesto Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," New Left Review 1971 (67):19-38; and Heinz Dieterich, Relaciones de producción en América Latina (México: Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1978).

3. See for example Carlos Sempat Assadourian, "Modos de producción, capitalismo y subdesarrollo en América Latina," in Carlos Sempat Assadourian et al. Modos de producción en América Latina (México: Siglo XXI, 1973):47-81; and Aidan Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," New Left Review 1973 (107):47-74

4. Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations (London:Lawrence & Wishart, 1964).

5. Douglas Friedman, The State and Underdevelopment in Spanish America (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984).

6. Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth (New York: Harper, 1965).

7. For Argentina see, Laura Randall, A Comparative Economic History of Latin America, 1500-1914. Vol. 2 Argentina. (Published for the Institute of Latin American Studies, Columbia University, by University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977); and Miron Burgin, The Economic Aspects of Argentine Federalism (New York: Russell & Russell, (1946), 1971. For Chile see, Alcira Leiserson, Notes on the Process of Industrialization in Argentina, Chile and Peru (Berkeley: University of Southern California; and Julio Cesar Jobert Burquez, Ensayo crítico del desarrollo económica social en Chile (Santiago: Editorial Univeritaria, 1955. Similar type policies were tried in Mexico and Colombia - see, Guy P.C. Thomson, "Protectionism and Industrialization in Mexico, 1821-1875," in Christopher Abel and Colin Lewis (eds.) Latin America, Economic Imperialism and the State (London: Athlone Press, 1985):126-146. - and in Colombia - see, Anthony McFarlane, "The Transition from Colonialism in Colombia, 1819-1875," in Christopher Abel and Colin Lewis (eds.) Latin

America, Economic Imperialism and the State (London: Athlone Press, 1985):102=124.

8. See Omar Díaz de Arce, "El Processo de formación de los estados nacionales en América Latina," Santiago 1980 (37):9-82; Irene Nicholson, The Liberators (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968); and William Spence Robertson, The Rise of the Spanish-American Republics (New York: Free Press, 1965).

9. Karl Marx, Revolution in Spain (New York: International Publishers, 1939):25-26.

10. Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State (London: New Left Books, 1975):71. Also see, Ronald Glassman, Political History of Latin America (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969):76.

11. Richard Morse, "A Framework for Latin American Urban History," in Jorge E. Hardoy (ed.), Urbanization in Latin America (New York: Doubleday Press, 1975):57-100. See also, O. Carlos Stoetzer, The Scholastic Roots of the Spanish American Revolution (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979); and Magali Sarafatti, Spanish Bureaucratic Patrimonialism (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies. University of California Press, 1966).

12. Karl Marx, Grundrisse (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Press, 1973):473. For a thorough discussion of the Asiatic mode of production see, Lawrence Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Comp., 1975).

13. Alfred Metraux, Les Incas (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961).

14. John Leddy Phelan, "Authority and Flexibility in the Spanish Imperial Bureaucracy," Administrative Science Quarterly 1960 (5):47-65.

15. Marx, Revolution in Spain, 25.

16. Phelan, "Authority and Flexibility...," and Sarafatti, Spanish Bureaucratic Patrimonialism.

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18. Stoetzer, Scholastic Roots..., 10; and James Lang, Conquest and Commerce: Spain and England in the Americas (New York: Academic Press, 1975):43-44.

19. Jacques A. Barbier, "Elite and Cadres in Bourbon Chile," Hispanic American Historical Review 1972 52 (3):416-435.

20. Morse, "A Framework...." 57-100.

21. Ibid., 80-89.

22. John Fisher, Government and Society in Colonial Peru. The Intendant System 1784-1814 (London: Athlone Press, 1971); and John Lynch, Spanish Colonial Administration, 1762-1810 (London: Athlone Press, 1958).

23. Stoetzer, Scholastic Roots..., 10.

24. Ibid., 258-263.

25. Friedman, State and Underdevelopment, 93-107.

26. Ibid., 95-97.

27. Ibid., 97-99.

28. Ibid., 99-107.

29. see note #8.

30. See Ralph Lee Woodward, Central America: A Divided Nation. Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

31. See John Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs, Vol.2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969):184-228.

32. Ibid.

33. See Susan Ramirez, Provincial Patriarchs (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

34. Ruggiero Romano, "American Feudalism," Hispanic American Historical Review 1983 64(1):121-134. Also see, Witold Kula, An Economic Theory of the Feudal System (London: New Left Books, 1976).